

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

For immediate release

Friday, October 3, 2008

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IOWA'S ARCHERY DEER SEASON IS UNDERWAY

The opening of the archery deer season in Iowa began Oct. 1, marking an event awaited by more than 50,000 hunters each fall. With daytime temperatures predicted to be below normal through the upcoming weekend, conditions should be excellent for early season bowhunters.

While many bowhunters feel the late October – early November period coinciding with the whitetail rut marks the time to be in the woods; the early portions of the season can be productive as well. While the early season hunting can be more challenging due to the thick vegetation, limited visibility, and biting insects; the days can be successful if some time and effort is expended and the forecasted cooler temperatures will encourage more deer movement.

During the first part of October the deer are still in summer patterns and habitats. While white-tailed deer will move less compared to later in the fall and those movements will be fairly predictable. Deer will visit food sources, water, and bedding areas in a fairly consistent pattern and often their activities are restricted to a relatively small area. Many bucks are still in bachelor groups and their movements are often predictable until the group breakup occurs and the older bucks become more reclusive prior to the onset of the breeding season. With each passing cold front, more bucks will begin making signpost rubs and scrapes to advertise their presence but since the rut is still weeks away they will not be actively seeking does.

During the first few weeks of the season, hunters will often find the best success hunting food sources or trails leading to and from those sources. White oaks are currently dropping acorns and these, along with clovers and alfalfa, are currently very attractive to deer. If there are late planted soybean fields in the hunting area that are still nicely green (fields of this type can still be found in southern Iowa), deer will be utilizing these also. Hunters should remember that in the portions of Iowa that were heavily flooded that the distribution of forest and agricultural forages may have changed dramatically from the previous season.

Many hunters use tree stands and tree stand safety is crucial for a safe hunt. Hunting is generally very safe but climbing into and out of trees should be done with care. Hunters should inspect all of their gear to make sure it is in good condition and is working properly. And hunters should never get into a tree stand without a safety harness. Tree stand safety cannot be over stressed. If your safety equipment is of the older style, one-piece belt-type,

replace it with one of the modern harnesses that are currently available. They are worth the money and can save you from death or injury in instances where the older styles will not.

Hunters wanting to be successful need to practice with their bows so they can kill deer cleanly. Familiarity with their equipment, practice, sharp broadheads, wise shot choices, and knowledge of their quarry are all important for hunters to be consistently successful. It is also important to continue with practice sessions throughout the season.

The early portions of the season are great for becoming more involved with deer management in your hunting area. Information from the 2007/08 surveys indicates that while deer numbers are declining in much of southern and eastern Iowa, densities are still above objective. In central and portions of west central Iowa, deer populations are stable to slightly increasing. Bowhunters can help farmers and landowners by taking an antlerless deer or two early in the season. Many of Iowa's archers shoot one to several does during the season but others harvest none. If you are hunting where there are additional antlerless licenses available make an effort to kill at least one doe, the meat is of excellent quality and if the harvesting is done with some care, it does not negatively impact subsequent hunting opportunities on the property.

Many of Iowa's urban areas offer special hunts that bowhunters can participate in. These hunts often have extra requirements however, so contact the organization listed in the hunting regulation brochure before going afield. Hunters can also utilize the HUSH program to donate deer to the Iowa Food Bank and provide needed meat for Iowans. Last year during the deer seasons more than 8,300 deer were donated to the program resulting in well over 350,000 pounds of boneless meat.

A tagging requirement that is new for 2008 requires a hunter who kills an antlered buck to place the transportation tag on the animal's antler. It is recommended that the tag be placed on the antler beam either at the base or between two points. This new law was passed by the Legislature during their last session.

The archery deer season runs from Oct. 1 through Dec. 5, and from Dec. 22 through Jan. 10. Hunting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. All deer taken must be reported using the harvest reporting system by midnight the day after the deer is recovered. This is the third year where hunters have reported their kill and it is a very important part of the deer management program in Iowa, playing a vital role in managing deer populations and hunting opportunities. Hunters can report their deer on the DNR website (www.iowadnr.gov), by calling the toll free reporting number (1-800-771-4692), or also at a license vender. For hunters with internet access, the online reporting of the harvest is a quick and easy way to register your deer.

Last year archery hunters reported harvesting 23,904 deer of which 48 percent were antlerless. A harvest of about 60 percent antlerless deer is needed have the does represent about 50 percent of the harvest (since button bucks are included in the antlerless pool) and this is something that bowhunters hunting in portions of the state that are still above density objectives should strive to meet or exceed with their harvest.

For more information, contact Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist at (641) 774-2958.

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PRODUCERS BENEFIT FROM PROGRAM TARGETING PROBLEM DEER

A program to help producers reduce damage to tree farms and row crops from problem deer has shown good results. Producers who qualify for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' wildlife depredation program may receive shooting permits that allow them, or their designated shooter, take deer outside of normal hunting seasons.

"We have been actively working with producers to get more shooting permits out there to address these specific situations, but unfortunately there is some misunderstanding about what is allowed with these permits," said Bill Bunger, wildlife depredation biologist with the Iowa DNR.

Shooting permits are issued to a producer outside of traditional hunting seasons as a way to prevent crop damage before the damage occurs. These permits are not meant as a form of deer population control. The DNR uses depredation licenses and regular licenses during existing hunting seasons as a way to reduce the deer herd.

The producer is allowed to designate some other person or persons willing to participate in the program as a shooter, if the designated shooter is not the producer. The shooter is identified on the agreement that outlines the rules of the program. Once a shooter is identified on the permit, the permit cannot be given to anyone else. And therein lies the problem.

"Think of these shooting permits like a hunting license. You cannot give your hunting license – or driver's license for that matter – to another person to use. That's not allowed but we have found a few cases where that has taken place with these shooting permits. The designated shooters are identified on the agreement and if the person possessing the permit's name does not appear on the permit, they cannot participate in the hunt," Bunger said.

Bunger says the responsibility for compliance with the rules spelled out in the agreement is with the producer and he encourages them to show the agreement to the shooters so they understand and abide by its terms.

"Another issue, which is spelled out in the agreement the producer signs, is that if a buck deer is taken, the head and antlers must be turned over to the local conservation officer, and it seems some of these shooters are saying they were unaware of that," he said.

He said these problems are isolated and the majority of the producers are having no problems with compliance and are seeing the benefits of the program.

Media Contact: Bill Bunger, wildlife depredation biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-975-8318.

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DEER HUNTERS WILLING TO HELP

Iowa producers with chronic deer depredation issues (deer damaging crops) understand that deer numbers must be managed locally to reduce deer densities to acceptable levels. Producers realize that shooting antlerless deer is needed to reduce deer herd numbers and many producers are able to keep deer numbers on their lands to acceptable levels by hunting antlerless deer themselves.

However, there are producers who must rely on hunters to do the culling of antlerless deer for them, because they are not capable of hunting themselves, or because they need to take more antlerless deer on their farm than they can take for themselves. Producers can allow more access to land for deer hunting but unfortunately, many hunters are unwilling to hunt antlerless deer.

Some producers have asked the DNR assist them in locating hunters interested in harvesting antlerless deer, and have expressed support for a system by which they could contact hunters who are willing to harvest antlerless deer.

If you would like to have your name, address, and phone number supplied to requesting producers, log on to the Iowa DNR's wildlife damage management page at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/damage.html> and click on the [Landowner/Deer Hunter Registry](#) link at the bottom of the page, then complete the information in the form. The Iowa DNR's depredation biologist will maintain and provide a list of hunters to requesting producers.